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Title: “Revision of the Romanian Political Spectrum”

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James Rinehart is a senior in the Department of History at Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne. He is scheduled to graduate in spring 2012. This is James’ first time speaking at the Undergraduate History Conference. His research interests are primarily focused in the political history of the Balkans. His future plans are to attend graduate school to study the history of the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Other hobbies of James are participating in athletics, performing music, and traveling

Abstract

Balkan state politics underwent a series of ideological shifts during the 20th century. At the end of WWI, nationalism increased in importance in several Fascist Balkan States during the interwar period. Romania, one of the more multi-national states in the Balkans, created a nationalist organization called the Iron Guard. Following WWII, Fascism was disbanded in Romania and Communism came to the forefront for Romanian Politics under the influence of the Soviet Union. This political transition is significant for the reason that on a traditional political spectrum, Fascism and Communism are considered polar opposing ideologies, yet several of the Balkan states, in particular, Romania, transitioned from one end of the spectrum to the next with what appeared to be ease. To make a political transition from one regime to the next is difficult, but to transition from one extreme to the next without civil war or mass killing demonstrated two things: Romania was in poor economic shape and willing to try anything to revive its economy, and secondly, two of the major political regimes during the Fascist and Communist eras were not as different as they claimed. In fact, both the Fascist dictator, Ion Antonescu and Communist dictator, Nicolae Ceausescu’s political systems shared many key components during their years in power. This easy transition from Fascism to Communism in Romania challenges the initial construction of the political spectrum and demands consideration for reconstruction. Therefore, studying the two Romanian political figures, Ion Antonescu and Nicolae Ceausescu, and their use of a dictatorial form of government, totalitarianism, and nationalism might suggest a movement for the reconstruction of the Romanian political spectrum from its original linear design into a new spherical construct.